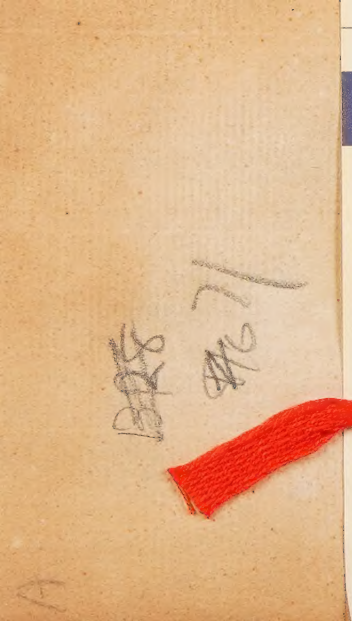

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THOUGHTS

ON THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT.

THOUGHTS

ON THE

IMPORTANCE

OF THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT

TO

GENERAL SOCIETY.

YOU ARE THE MAKERS OF MANNERS.
SHAKESPEARE.

EIGHTH EDITION.

LONDON:

PRINTED FOR T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

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THOUGHTS

ON THE

MANNERS OF THE GREAT.

TO a large and honourable claſs of the community, to perſons conſiderable in reputation, important by their condition in life, and commendable for the decency of their general conduct, theſe ſlight hints are reſpectfully addreſſed. They are not intended as a ſatire upon

vice, or a ridicule upon folly, being written neither for the fooliſh nor the vicious. The ſubject is too ſerious for ridicule; and thoſe to whom it is addreſſed are too reſpectable for ſatire. It is recommended to the conſideration of thoſe who, filling the higher ranks in life, are naturally regarded as patterns, by which the manners of the reſt of the world are to be faſhioned.

The maſs of mankind, in moſt places, and in moſt conditions of life, is perhaps chiefly compoſed of what may be termed *good kind of people*;

people; for perſons of very flagitious wickedneſs are almoſt as rare as thoſe of very eminent piety: to the latter of theſe, admonition were impertinent; to the former it were ſuperfluous. Theſe remarks, therefore, are principally written with a view to thoſe perſons of rank and fortune who live within the reſtraints of moral obligation, and acknowledge the truth of the Chriſtian religion; and who, if in certain inſtances they allow themſelves in practices not compatible with a ſtrict profeſſion of Chriſtianity, ſeem to do it rather from habit and want of re-

flection, than either from diſbelief of its doctrines, or contempt of its precepts.

Inconſideration, Faſhion, and the World, are three confederates againſt Virtue, with whom even good kind of people often contrive to live on excellent terms: and the fair reputation which may be obtained by a complaiſant conformity to the prevailing practice, and by mere decorum of manners, without a ſtrict attention to religious principle, is a conſtant ſource of danger to the rich and great. There is ſomething almoſt

moſt irreſiſtibly ſeducing in the contagion of general example: hence the neceſſity of that vigilance, which it is the buſineſs of Chriſtianity to quicken by inceſſant admonition, and of the world, to lay aſleep by the perpetual opiates of eaſe and pleaſure.

A fair reputation is one of the moſt laudable objects of human ambition; yet even this really valuable bleſſing is ſometimes converted into a ſnare, by inducing a treacherous ſecurity as ſoon as it is obtained. A fatal indolence is apt to creep in

upon the ſoul when it has once acquired the good opinion of mankind, if the acquiſition of that good opinion was the ultimate end of its endeavours. Purſuit is at an end when the object is in poſſeſſion; for he is not likely to "preſs forward" who thinks he has already "attained." The love of worldly reputation, and the deſire of God's favour, have this ſpecific difference, that in the latter, the poſſeſſion always augments the deſire; and the ſpiritual mind accounts nothing done while any thing remains undone.

But

But after all, a fair fame, and the ſupport of numbers, is obviouſly a deceitful dependence; for as every individual muſt die for himſelf, and anſwer for himſelf, both theſe imaginary reſources will fail, juſt at the moment when they could have been of any uſe. A good reputation, even without internal piety, would be worth obtaining, if the tribunal of heaven were faſhioned after the manner of human courts of judicature. If at the general judgment we were to be tried by a jury of our fellow mortals, it would be but common prudence to ſecure

their favour at any price. But it can now ſtand us in little ſtead in the great day of deciſion, as it is the conſummation of infinite goodneſs not to abandon us to the mercy of each other's ſentence; but to reſerve us for *his* final judgment who knows every motive of every action; who will make ſtrict inquiſition into ſincerity of heart, and uprightneſs of intention: in whoſe eyes an ineffectual prayer, or a powerleſs wiſh, will outweigh the moſt ſplendid profeſſion, or the moſt dazzling action.

We cannot but rejoice in every degree

degree of human virtue which operates favourably on ſociety, whatever be the motive, or whoever be the actor; and we ſhould gladly commend every degree of goodneſs, though it be not ſquared by our own rules and notions. Even the good actions of ſuch perſons as are too much actuated by a regard to appearances, are not without their beneficial effects. The righteouſneſs of thoſe who occupy this middle region of morality certainly exceeds the righteouſneſs of the Scribes and Phariſees; for they are not only exact in ceremonials, but in many reſpects

reſpects fulfil the weightier matters of law and conſcience. Like Herod, they often "hear gladly, and do many things." Yet I am afraid I ſhall be thought ſevere in remarking that, in general, thoſe characters in the New Teſtament, of whoſe future condition no very comfortable hope is given, ſeem to have been taken, not from the profligate, the abandoned, and the diſhonourable; but from that decent claſs commonly deſcribed by the term of *good ſort of people*; that mixed kind of character in which virtue appears, if it does not predominate. The young Ruler

was

was certainly one of the firſt of this order; and yet we are left in dark uncertainty as to his final allotment. The rich man who built him barns and ſtorehouſes, and only propoſed to himſelf the full enjoyment of that fortune, which, perhaps, he had very fairly obtained, might have been, for all that appears to the contrary, a very good ſort of man; at leaſt, if we may judge of him by multitudes who live preciſely for the ſame purpoſes, and yet enjoy a good degree of credit, and are rather conſidered as objects of admiration than of cenſure.

But

But the moſt alarming inſtance is that of the ſplendid, and not illiberal epicure, who was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared ſumptuouſly every day. He committed no enormities that have been tranſmitted to us; for that he dined well and dreſſed well, could hardly incur the bitter penalty of eternal miſery. That his expences were ſuitable to his ſtation, and his ſplendour proportioned to his opulence, does not exhibit any objection to his character. Nor does he appear to have refuſed the crumbs which Lazarus ſolicited; on the contrary, it

is

is probable that the reputation of his bounty drew the needy petitioner to his gate. Here is magnificence which is uncenſurable, and here is bounty which is meritorious. And yet this man, on an authority, which we are not permitted to queſtion, is repreſented, in a future ſtate, as *lifting up his eyes, being in torments.* His puniſhment ſeems to have been the conſequence of an irreligious, worldly ſpirit, a heart corrupted by the ſoftneſſes and delights of life. It was not becauſe he was rich, but becauſe he truſted in riches; it was not that he was uncharitable, but that

that his charity wanted the principle which alone could ſanctify it. His views terminated here; this world's good, and this world's applauſe, were the motives and the end of his actions. He forgot God; he was deſtitute of piety; and the abſence of this great and firſt principle of human actions, rendered his ſhining deeds, however they might be admired among men, of no value in the ſight of God.

There is no error more common, or more dangerous, than the notion that an unreſtrained indulgence of appetite

appetite is generally attended with a liberal, humane, and merciful temper. Nor is there any opinion more falſe and more fatal, or which demands to be more ſteadily controverted, than that libertiniſm and good-nature are natural and neceſſary aſſociates. For after all that corrupt poets, and more corrupt philoſophers, have told us of the blandiſhments of pleaſure, and of its tendency to ſoften the temper, and humanize the affections, it is certain, that nothing hardens the heart like exceſſive and unbounded luxury; and he who refuſes the feweſt gratifications to his own

own voluptuouſneſs, will generally be found the leaſt ſuſceptible of tenderneſs for the wants of others. The cruelties at Rome bore an exact proportion to the diſſoluteneſs at Capreæ. And it is not leſs notorious, that the Imperial fiddler became more barbarous, as he grew more profligate. Proſperity, ſays the Arabian proverb, fills the heart till it makes it hard; and the moſt dangerous pits and ſnares for human virtue are thoſe, which are ſo covered over with the flowers of proſperous fortune, that it requires a cautious

cautious foot, and a vigilant eye, to eſcape them.

Even Ananias and Saphira were, I doubt not, well eſteemed in ſociety; for it was enough to eſtabliſh a very conſiderable reputation to ſell even part of their poſſeſſions for religious purpoſes: but what an alarm does it ſound to hypocriſy, that, inſtead of being rewarded for what they brought, they were puniſhed for what they kept back! And it is to be feared, that this deceitful pair are not the only one, upon whom a good action, without

a pure intention, has drawn down a righteous retribution.

For though outward actions are the ſureſt, and to human eyes the only evidences of ſincerity, yet Chriſtianity is a religion of *motives* and *principles*. The Goſpel is continually referring to the *heart*, as the ſource of good; it is to the poor in *ſpirit*, to the pure in *heart*, that the divine bleſſing is annexed. A man may correct many improper practices, and refrain from many immoral actions, from merely human motives; but, though this partial amend-

amendment is not without its uſes, yet this is only attacking ſymptoms, and neglecting the mortal diſeaſe. But to ſubdue a worldly temper, to control irregular deſires, and to have a clean heart, is to extinguiſh the ſoul, and ſpirit, and eſſence of ſin. Totally to *accompliſh* this, is, perhaps, beyond the narrow limits of human perfection: but to *attempt* it (with an humble reliance on ſuperior aid), is ſo far from being an extravagant or romantic flight of virtue, that it is but the common duty of every ordinary Chriſtian. And this perfection is not the leſs real, becauſe

it is a point which ſeems conſtantly to recede from our approaches. Our higheſt attainments, inſtead of bringing us "to the mark," only teach us to remove the mark to a greater diſtance, by giving us more humbling views of ourſelves, and more exalted conceptions of the ſtate which we are labouring after. Though the progreſs towards perfection may be perpetual in this world, the actual attainment is reſerved for a better. And this reſtleſs deſire of a happineſs which we cannot reach, and this lively idea of a perfection which we cannot attain, are among the

the many arguments for a future ſtate, which ſeem to come little ſhort of abſolute demonſtration.

But I muſt remember, that this is not a ſermon, but a mere ſuperficial eſſay. I am neither an old man, a clergyman, nor a methodiſt, ſo that it is at leaſt *poſſible* that I may be neither actuated by moroſeneſs, ſelf-intereſt, nor enthuſiaſm. I live much in the world, and have as much ſatisfaction in its lawful pleaſures, and permitted indulgencies, as other men. I endeavour to cultivate the greateſt candour for the

opinions, and affection for the perſons of all my fellow-creatures. I am charmed with humanity, generoſity, and integrity, even in worldly men. But one virtue muſt not intrench upon another. Charity muſt not ſupplant faith. If a man be generous, good-natured, and humane, it is impoſſible not to feel for him the tenderneſs of a brother; but if, at the ſame time, he be irreligious, intemperate, or profane, who ſhall dare to ſay he is in a ſafe ſtate? Good-humour, and generous ſentiments, will always make a man a pleaſant acquaintance; but who

ſhall

ſhall lower the doctrines of the Goſpel, to accommodate them to the conduct of men? Who ſhall bend a ſtrait rule, to favour a crooked practice? Who ſhall controvert that authority which has ſaid, that *without holineſs, no man ſhall ſee the Lord?*

May I venture to be a little paradoxical; and while ſo many grave perſons are deſcanting on the miſchiefs of vice, may I be permitted to ſay a word on the miſchiefs of virtue; or, rather, of that ſhining counterfeit, which, while it wants the ſpecific gravity, has much of the

brightneſs of ſterling worth? Never, perhaps, did any age produce more beautiful declamations in praiſe of virtue than the preſent; never were more poliſhed periods rounded in honour of humanity. An ancient Pagan would imagine that Aſtrea had returned to take up her abode in our metropolis; a primitive Chriſtian would conclude, that "righteouſneſs and peace had there "met together." But how would they be ſurpriſed to find that the obligation to theſe duties was not always thought binding on their eloquent encomiaſts! that univerſal benevolence

nevolence may ſubſiſt with partial injuſtice, and boundleſs liberality with ſordid ſelfiſhneſs! that one may ſeem eager in redreſſing the injuries of half the globe, without deſcending to the petty detail of private virtues; and burn with zeal for the good of millions one never ſaw, and yet ſpread vice and ruin through the little circle of one's own perſonal influence!

When the general texture of an irregular life is ſpangled over with ſome conſtitutional pleaſing qualities; when gaiety, good humour,

mour, and a thoughtleſs profuſion of expence, throw a luſtre round the faultieſt characters, it is no wonder that common obſervers are blinded into admiration; a profuſe generoſity dazzles *them* more than all the duties of the decalogue. But though it may be a very uſeful quality towards ſecuring the election of a borough, it will contribute but little towards making ſure the calling and election to the kingdom of heaven. It is ſomewhat ſtrange that extravagance ſhould be the great criterion of goodneſs with thoſe very people who are themſelves the victims

victims to this idol; for the prodigal pays no debts if he can help it: and it is notorious, that in one of the wittieſt and moſt popular comedies which this country has ever produced, thoſe very paſſages which exalt liberality at the expence of juſtice, were nightly applauded with enthuſiaſtic rapture by thoſe deluded tradeſmen, whom, perhaps, that very ſentiment helped to keep out of their money.

But there is another ſort of faſhionable character, whoſe falſe brightneſs is ſtill more pernicious, by caſting

ing a ſplendour over the moſt de-ſtructive vices. Corrupt manners, ruinous extravagance, and the moſt fatal paſſion for play, are ſometimes gilded over with many engaging acts of charity, and a general attention and reſpect to the ceremonials of Chriſtianity. But this is degrading the venerable image and ſuperſcription of religion, by ſtamping them on baſer metal than they were ever intended to impreſs. The young and gay ſhelter themſelves under ſuch examples, and ſcruple the leſs to adopt the bad parts of ſuch mixed characters, when they ſee that an immoral

immoral conduct is so compatible with a religious profession.

But I digress from my intention; for it is not the purpose of this address to take notice of any actions which the common consent of mankind has determined to be wrong: but of such chiefly as are practised by the sober, the decent, and the regular; and to drop a few hints on such less obvious offences as are, in general,

Safe from the bar, the pulpit, and the throne.

Nor will the bounds which I have prescribed myself allow of my wandering

dering into a wide and general field of obſervation.

The idea of the preſent ſlight performance was ſuggeſted by reading the King's late excellent proclamation againſt irreligion and immorality. Under the ſhelter of ſo high a ſanction, it may not be unſeaſonable to preſs on the hearts of the better diſpoſed, ſuch obſervances as ſeem to be generally overlooked, and to remark ſuch offences as commonly elude cenſure, becauſe they are not commonly thought cenſurable.

It

It is obvious to all ſerious perſons, that that branch of the divine law, againſt which the better kind of people treſpaſs with the leaſt ſcruple, is the fourth commandment. Many who would ſhudder at the violation of the other nine, ſeem without ceremony to expunge this from the divine code; but by what authority they do this, has never been explained. The Chriſtian legiſlator does not ſeem to have abridged the commandments; and there is no ſubſequent authority ſo much as pretended to by Proteſtants.

It is not here intended to take notice of ſuch flagrant offences as lie open to the cognizance of higher tribunals; or to pollute this paper with deſcanting on the holders of card aſſemblies on Sundays; the frequenters of taverns and gaming houſes; the printers of Sunday newſpapers; the proprietors of Sunday ſtage coaches; and others who openly inſult the laws of the land; laws which will always be held ſacred by good citizens, even were not the law of God antecedent to them.

Many of the order whom I here addreſs

addreſs are perſons of the tendereſt humanity, and not only wiſh well to the intereſts of virtue, but are favourably diſpoſed to advance the cauſe of religion; nay, would be extremely ſtartled at not being thought ſincerely religious: yet from inconſideration, want of time, want of ſelf-examination, want of ſuſpecting the deceitfulneſs of the human heart, ſometimes allow themſelves in inattentions and negligences which materially affect their own ſafety, and the comfort of others.—While an animated ſpirit of charity ſeems to be kindled among us:

while there is a general diſpoſition to inſtruct the ignorant, and to reform the vicious; one cannot help regretting that theſe amiable exertions ſhould be counteracted, in ſome degree, by practices of a directly oppoſite tendency; trifling in their appearance, but ſerious in their effects.

There are ſtill among us petty domeſtic evils, which ſeem too inconſiderable to claim redreſs. There is an aggrieved body of men in our very capital, whoſe ſpiritual hardſhips ſeem ſcarcely to have been taken

taken into conſideration, I mean the HAIR DRESSERS, on whom

The Sunday ſhines, no day of reſt to them.

Is there not a peculiar degree of unkindneſs in exerciſing ſuch cruelty on the ſouls of men, whoſe whole lives are employed in embelliſhing our perſons? And is it quite conceivable how a lady's conſcience is able to make ſuch nice diſtinctions, that ſhe would be ſhocked at the idea of ſending for her mantua-maker or milliner, her carpenter or maſon, on a Sunday, while ſhe makes no ſcruple regularly to employ a hair dreſſer?

Is it not almoſt ridiculous to obſerve the zeal we have for doing good at a diſtance, while we neglect the little, obvious, every-day, domeſtic duties, which ſhould ſeem to ſolicit our immediate attention? But an action ever ſo right and meritorious, which is only to be periodically performed, at diſtant intervals, is leſs burthenſome to corrupt nature, than an undeviating attention to ſuch ſmall, conſtant, right habits as are hoſtile to our natural indolence, and would be perpetually vexing and diſturbing our ſelf-love. The weak heart indulges

dulges its infirmity, by allowing itſelf intermediate omiſſions, and habitual neglects of duty; repoſing itſelf for ſafety, on regular but remote returns of ſtated performances. It is leſs trouble to ſubſcribe to the propagation of the Goſpel in foreign parts, than to have daily prayers in our own families; and I am perſuaded that there are multitudes of well-meaning people who would gladly contribute to a miſſion of Chriſtianity to Japan or Otaheite, to whom it never occurred that the hair-dreſſer, whom they are every Sunday detaining from church, has

a ſoul to be ſaved; that the law of the land co-operates with the law of God, to forbid their employing him; and that they have no right, either legal or moral, to this portion of his time. The poor man himſelf, perhaps, dares not remonſtrate, for fear he ſhould be deprived of his employment for the reſt of the week. If there were no other objection to a pleaſurable Sunday among the great and affluent, methinks this ſingle one might operate: would not a devout heart be unwilling to rob a fellow-creature of his time

time for devotion, or a humane one of his hour of reſt?

It is ſtrange that there ſhould be ſo little conſiſtency in human conduct, that the ſame perſons ſhould gladly contribute to ſpread the light of Chriſtianity in another hemiſphere; while, by their example, they actually obſtruct the progreſs of it at home. But it is, I doubt not, much oftener owing to the imperceptible influence of cuſtom and habit, than to a decided ill intention. Beſides, it may be in morals as it is in optics, the eye and the

object may come too close to each other, to answer the end of vision. There are certain faults which press too near our self-love to be even perceptible to us.

There is an evil newly crept into polished society, and it comes under a mask so specious, that they are chiefly *good sort of people* who are allured by it; I mean SUNDAY CONCERTS. Many who would be startled at a prophane, or even an idle amusement, think that the name of *sacred music* sanctifies the diversion. But if those who live in ease and

and affluence do not make theſe petty renunciations of their own ways, and their own pleaſure, what criterion have we by which to judge of their ſincerity? For as the goodneſs of Providence has exempted them from painful occupations, they have neither labour from which to reſt, nor buſineſs from which to refrain. A little abſtinence from pleaſure is the only evidence of their obedience to the divine precept.

I know with what indignant ſcorn this remark will, by many, be received;

ceived: that much will be advanced in favour of the ſanctity of this amuſement. I ſhall be told that the words are, many of them, extracted from the Bible, and that the compoſition is the divine Handel's. But were the angel Gabriel the poet, the archangel Michael the compoſer, and the ſong of the Lamb the ſubject, it would not abrogate that ſtatute of the Moſt High, which has ſaid, "Thou ſhalt keep holy the "Sabbath-day, and thy SERVANT, "and thy CATTLE, ſhall do no man-"ner of work."—I am perſuaded that the hallelujahs of heaven would make

make no moral muſic to the ear of a conſcientious perſon, while he reflected that multitudes of ſervants are waiting in the ſtreet, expoſed to every temptation; engaged, perhaps, in prophane ſwearing, and idle, if not diſſolute converſation: and the very cattle are deprived of that reſt which the tender mercy of God was graciouſly pleaſed, by an aſtoniſhing condeſcenſion, to include in the commandment.

But I will, for the ſake of argument, ſo far concede as to allow of the innocence, and even piety of Sunday

Sunday concerts: I will ſuppoſe (what, however, does not always happen) that no unhallowed ſtrains are ever introduced; that ſome attend theſe concerts with a view to cultivate devout affections; that they cheriſh the ſerious impreſſions excited by the muſic, and retire in ſuch a frame of ſpirit as convinces them that the heart was touched while the ear was gratified: Nay, I *would* grant, if ſuch a conceſſion would be accepted, that the intervals were filled up with converſation, "where-"by one may edify another:"—Yet all theſe good effects allowing them really

really to have been produced, will not remove the invincible objection of an EVIL EXAMPLE; and what liberal ſpirit would refuſe any reaſonable ſacrifice of its own pleaſure to ſo important a motive? Your ſervants have been accuſtomed to conſider a concert as a ſecular diverſion; if you, therefore, continue it on a Sunday, will not they alſo expect to be indulged on that day with their common amuſements? Saint Paul, who was a very liberal thinker, believed it prudent to make frequent ſacrifices of things indifferent in themſelves. He was willing to deny

deny himſelf a harmleſs and lawful gratification, *even as long as the world ſtood*, rather than ſhock the tender conſciences of men of leſs underſtanding. Where a practice is neither good nor evil in itſelf, it is both diſcreet and generous to avoid it, if it can be attended with any poſſible danger to minds leſs enlightened, and to faith leſs confirmed.

But religion apart, I have ſometimes wondered that people do not yield to the temptation that is held out to them, of abſtaining from diverſions one day in ſeven, upon motives

motives of mere human policy; as voluptuaries ſometimes faſt, to give a keener reliſh to the delights of the next repaſt. For pleaſure, like an over-fed lamp, is extinguiſhed by the exceſs of its own aliment. But the lovers of pleaſure are not always prudent, even upon their own principles; for I am perſuaded that the world would afford much more real ſatisfaction than it does, if we did not preſs, and torture, and ſtrain it, to yield what it does not contain: Much good, and much pleaſure, it does liberally beſtow; but no labour, or art, can extract from it that elixir

elixir of peace, that divine eſſence of content, which it is not in its nature to produce. There is good ſenſe in ſearching into every bleſſing for its *hidden* properties; but it is folly to ranſack and plunder it for ſuch as the experience of all ages tells us are *foreign* to it. We exhauſt the world of its pleaſures, and then lament that it is empty; we wring thoſe pleaſures to the very dregs, and then complain that they are vapid.

I ſhall, probably, be accuſed of a very narrow and fanatical ſpirit, in animad-

animadverting on a practice ſo little ſuſpected of harm as the frequenting of public walks and gardens on a Sunday: and, certainly, there cannot be an amuſement more entirely harmleſs in itſelf. But I muſt appeal to the honeſt teſtimony of our own hearts, if the *effect* be favourable to ſerioufneſs. Do we commonly retire from theſe places with the impreſſions which were made on us at church in their full force? We entered theſe ſprightly ſcenes, perhaps, with a ſtrong remaining tincture of that devout ſpirit which the public worſhip had infuſed into the mind.

But have we not felt it gradually diminiſh? Have not our powers of reſiſtance grown inſenſibly weaker? The doctrines, which in the morning appeared the ſober dictates of reaſon, now ſeem unreaſonably rigid; and truths, which were then thought incontrovertible, now appear impertinent. To anſwer arguments is much eaſier than to withſtand allurement. The underſtanding may controvert a ſtartling propoſition with leſs difficulty than the ſliding heart can reſiſt the infection of ſeducing gaiety. To oppoſe a cold and ſpeculative faith to the illuſion of preſent

ſent pleaſure, is to fight with inadequate weapons: it is reſiſting *arms* with *rules*; it is combating a temptation with an idea. Whereas, he who engages in the Chriſtian warfare, will find that his chief ſtrength conſiſts in knowing that he is very weak; that to retreat from danger is his higheſt glory, and to decline the combat his trueſt courage.

Whatever indiſpoſes the mind for the duty of any particular ſeaſon, though it aſſume ever ſo innocent a form, cannot be perfectly right. If the heart be laid open to the in-

curſion of vain imaginations, and worldly thoughts, it matters little by what gate the enemy entered. If the effect be injurious, the cauſe cannot be quite harmleſs. It is the perfidious property of certain pleaſures, that, though they ſeem not to have the ſmalleſt harm in themſelves, they imperceptibly indiſpoſe the mind to every thing that is good.

Many readers will be apt to produce againſt all this preciſeneſs, that hackneyed remark which one is tired of hearing, that Sunday diverſions are

are allowed publicly in many foreign countries, as well in thoſe profeſſing the reformed religion, as popery. But the corruptions of one part of the Proteſtant world are no reaſonable juſtification of the evil practices of another. Error and infirmity can never be proper objects of imitation. It is ſtill a remnant of the old leaven: and as to pleading the practice of Roman Catholic countries, one bluſhes to hear an enlightened Proteſtant juſtifying himſelf by examples drawn from that benighted religion.

Beſides, though I am far from vindicating the amuſements permitted on Sundays in foreign countries, by allowing that eſtabliſhed cuſtom, and long preſcription, have the privilege of conferring right: yet foreigners may, at leaſt, plead the ſanction of cuſtom, and the connivance of the law. While in this country, the law of the land, and eſtabliſhed uſage, concurring with ſtill higher motives, give a ſort of venerable ſanction to religious obſervances, the breach of which will be always more liable to miſconſtruction

ſtruction than in countries where ſo many motives do not concur.

I am not an advocate for the ſeverity of a Jewiſh, or the moroſeneſs of a puritanical Sabbath. I am likewiſe far from inferring that all thoſe who neglect a ſtrict obſervation of Sunday are remiſs in the performance of their other duties; but I will venture to affirm, that all whom I have remarked conſcientiouſly to obſerve this day from right motives, have been uniformly attentive to their general conduct. It has been the opinion of many wiſe

and good men, * that Chriſtianity will ſtand, or fall, as this day is ne-

* The teſtimony of one lawyer will, perhaps, be leſs ſuſpected than that of many prieſts. —" I have ever found," ſays the great Lord Chief Juſtice Hale, " by a ſtrict and diligent " obſervation, that a due obſervance of the " duty of Sunday has ever had joined to it " a bleſſing upon the reſt of my time; and " the week that has been ſo begun has been " bleſſed and proſperous to me: and, on the " other ſide, when I have been negligent of " the duties of this day, the reſt of the " week has been unſucceſsful and unhappy " to my own ſecular employments. So that " I could eaſily make an eſtimate of my ſuc-

" ceſſes

neglected, or obſerved. Sunday ſeems to be a kind of Chriſtian Palladium; and the city of God will never be totally taken by the enemy till the obſervance of that be quite loſt. Every ſincere ſoldier of the great Captain of our Salvation muſt, therefore, exert himſelf in its defence, as ever he would preſerve the divine Fort of Revelation againſt

" ceſſes the week following, by the manner " of my paſſing this day. AND I DO NOT " WRITE THIS LIGHTLY, BUT BY LONG " AND SOUND EXPERIENCE."

Sir Matthew Hale's Works.

the

the confederated attacks of the world and the Devil.

I ſhall proceed to enumerate a few of the many cauſes which ſeem to impede well-diſpoſed people in the progreſs of religion. None perhaps contributes more to it than that cold, prudential caution againſt the folly of aiming at *perfection*, ſo frequent in the mouths of the worldly wiſe. "We muſt take the world," ſay they, "as we find it; reforma-"tion is not the buſineſs of indivi-"duals, and we are commanded "not to be righteous overmuch."

But

But theſe admonitions are contrary to every maxim in human affairs. In arts and letters * the moſt conſummate models are held out to imitation. We never hear any body cautioned againſt becoming too wiſe, too learned, or too rich. Zeal, in buſineſs, is accounted commendable;

* When Pliny the younger was accuſed of deſpiſing the degenerate eloquence of his own age, and of the vanity of aſpiring at perfection in oratory, and of endeavouring to become the rival of Cicero; inſtead of denying the charge, he exclaimed with a noble ſpirit, STULTISSIMUM credo, ad imitandum non OPTIMA quæque proponere.

in

in friendſhip it is amiable; in ambition it is laudable; in all the periſhing concerns of earthly things it is extolled as exhibiting marks of a ſprightly temper, and a vigorous mind. Strange! that to be "fervent in ſpirit," ſhould only be diſhonourable in that ſingle inſtance which ſhould ſeem to demand unremitting diligence, and unextinguiſhed warmth.

But after all, is an exceſſive and intemperate zeal the *common* vice of the times? Is there any *very* imminent danger that the enthuſiaſm of the great ſhould tranſport them to dangerous and inconvenient exceſſes? Are our young

young men of fashion so *very* much led away by the ardour of piety, that they require to have their imaginations cooled by the freezing maxims of worldly wisdom? Is the spirit of the age so *very* much inclined to catch and communicate the fire of devotion, as to require to be damped by admonition, or extinguished by ridicule? When the inimitable Cervantes attacked the wild notions and romantic ideas which misled the age in which he lived, he did wisely, because he combated an actually existing evil; but in this latter end of the eighteenth

teenth century, there ſeems to be little more occaſion (among perſons of rank, I mean) of cautions againſt enthuſiaſm than againſt chivalry; and he who declaims againſt religious exceſſes in the company of well-bred people, ſhews himſelf to be as little acquainted with the manners of the times, as he would do who ſhould think it a point of duty to write another Don Quixote.

Among the devices dangerous to our moral ſafety, certain favourite and ſpecious maxims are not the leaſt ſucceſsful, as they carry with them

them an impoſing air of indulgent candour, and always ſeem to be on the popular ſide of good-nature. One of the moſt obvious of theſe is, that method of reconciling the conſcience to practices not decidedly wicked, and yet not ſcrupulouſly right, by the qualifying phraſe, *that there is no harm in it.* I am miſtaken if more innocent perſons do not inflame their ſpiritual reckoning by this treacherous apology than by almoſt any other means. Few are ſyſtematically, or premeditatedly wicked; or propoſe to themſelves, at firſt, more than ſuch ſmall indulgences as they are perſuaded

have

have no harm in them. But this latitude is gradually and imperceptibly enlarged. As the expreſſion is vague and indeterminate; as the darkeſt ſhade of virtue, and the lighteſt ſhade of vice, melt into no very incongruous colouring; as the bounds between good and evil are not always ſo preciſely defined, but that he who ventures to the confines of the one, will find himſelf on the borders of the other; every one furniſhes his own definition; every one extends the ſuppoſed limits a little farther; till the bounds which fence in permitted from unlawful pleaſures

pleaſures are gradually broken down, and the marks which ſeparated them imperceptibly deſtroyed.

It is, perhaps, one of the moſt alarming ſymptoms of the degeneracy of morals in the preſent day, that the diſtinctions of right and wrong are almoſt ſwept away in polite converſation. The moſt ſerious offences are often named with cool indifference; the moſt ſhameful profligacy with affected tenderneſs and indulgent toleration. The ſubſtitution of the word *gallantry* for that crime which ſtabs

 domeſtic

domeſtic happineſs and conjugal virtue, is one of the moſt dangerous of all the modern abuſes of language. Atrocious deeds ſhould never be called by gentle names. This muſt certainly contribute, more than any thing, to diminiſh the horror of vice in the riſing generation. That our paſſions ſhould be too often engaged on the ſide of error, we may look for the cauſe, though not for the vindication, in the unreſiſted propenſities of our conſtitution: but that our *reaſon* ſhould ever be employed in its favour, that our *converſation* ſhould ever be taught to palliate

palliate it, that our *judgment* ſhould ever look on it with indifference, has no ſhadow of excuſe: becauſe this can pretend to no foundation in nature, no apology in temptation, no palliative in paſſion.

However defective, therefore, our practice may be; however we may be allured by ſeduction, or precipitated by paſſion, let us beware of lowering the STANDARD of RIGHT. This induces an imperceptible corruption into the heart, ſtagnates the nobleſt principle of action, irrecoverably debaſes the ſenſe of moral and

religious obligation, and prevents us from living up to the height of our nature. It cuts off all comunication with virtue, and almoſt prevents the poſſibility of a return to it. If we do not riſe as high as we aim, we ſhall riſe the higher for having aimed at a lofty mark: but where the RULE is low, the practice cannot be high, though the converſe of the propoſition is not proportionably true.

Nothing more benumbs the exertions of ardent youthful virtue, than the

the cruel ſneer which worldly prudence beſtows on active goodneſs; and the cool deriſion it expreſſes at the defeat of a benevolent ſcheme, of which malice, rather than penetration, had foreſeen the failure. Alas! there is little need of any ſuch diſcouragements. The world is a climate which too naturally chills a glowing generoſity, and contracts an expanded heart. The zeal of the moſt ſanguine is but too apt to cool, and the activity of the moſt diligent, to ſlacken of itſelf: and the diſappointments which Benevolence encounters in the failure of

her beſt-concerted projects, and the frequent depravity of the moſt choſen objects of her bounty, would ſoon dry up the ampleſt ſtreams of charity, were they not fed by the living fountain of religious principle.

I cannot diſmiſs this part of my ſubject, without animadverting on the too prompt alacrity, even of worthy people, to diſſeminate, in public and general converſation, inſtances of their unſucceſsful attempts to do good. I never hear a charity ſtory begun to be related in mixed com-

company, that I do not tremble for the cataſtrophe, leſt it ſhould exhibit ſome mortifying diſappointment, which may deter the inexperienced from running any generous hazards, and excite harſh ſuſpicions, at an age, when it is leſs diſhonourable to meet with a few caſual hurts, and tranſient injuries, than to go caſed in the cumberſome and impenetrable armour of diſtruſt. The liberal ſhould be particularly cautious how they furniſh the avaricious with creditable pretences for ſaving their money, as all the inſtances of the mortification of the humane are

added to the armory of the covetous man's arguments, and produced, as defenſive weapons, upon every freſh attack on his heart or his purſe.

But I am willing to hope that that uncharitableneſs which we ſo often meet with in perſons of advanced years, is not always the effect of a heart naturally hard. Miſanthropy is very often nothing but abuſed ſenſibility. Long habits of the world, and a melancholy conviction how little good he has been able to do in it, harden many a tender-hearted perſon. The milk of human

man kindneſs becomes ſoured by repeated acts of ingratitude. This commonly induces an indifference to the well-being of others, and a hopeleſſneſs of adding to the ſtock of human virtue and human happineſs. This uncomfortable diſeaſe is very fond of ſpreading its own contagion, which is a cruelty to the health of young and uninfected virtue.—For this diſtemper, generated by a too ſanguine diſpoſition, and grown chronical from repeated diſappointments, there is but one remedy, or rather one prevention: and this is a genuine principle of

piety.

piety. He who is once convinced that he is to aſſiſt his fellow-creatures, becauſe it is the will of God, and one of the conditions of obtaining his favour, will ſoon get above all uneaſineſs when the conſequence does not anſwer his expectation. He will ſoon become only anxious to do his duty, humbly committing events to higher hands. Diſappointments will then only ſerve to refine his motives, and purify his virtue. His charity will then become a ſacrifice leſs unworthy of the altar on which it is offered. His affections will be more ſpiritualized,

ized, and his devotions more intenſe. Nothing ſhort of ſuch a courageous piety can preſerve a heart hackneyed in the world from relaxed diligence, or criminal deſpair.

People in general are not aware of the miſchief of judging of the rightneſs of any action by its proſperity, or of the excellence of any inſtitution by the abuſe of it. We muſt never proportion our exertions to our ſucceſs, but to our duty. If every laudable undertaking were to be dropped becauſe it failed in ſome caſes, or was abuſed in others, there would

would not be left an Alms-Houſe, a Charity School, or an Hoſpital in the land. And if every right practice were to be diſcontinued becauſe it had been found not to be ſucceſsful in every inſtance, this falſe reaſoning puſhed to the extreme, might at laſt be brought as an argument for ſhutting up our churches, and burning our bibles.

But if, on the one hand, there is a proud and arrogant diſcretion which ridicules, as Utopian and romantic, every generous project of the active and the liberal; ſo there is on the other,

other, a ſort of popular bounty which arrogates to itſelf the excluſive name of *feeling*, and rejects with diſdain the influence of an higher principle. I am far from intending to depreciate this humane and exquiſitely tender ſentiment, which the beneficent Author of our nature gave us, as a ſtimulus to remove the diſtreſſes of others, in order to get rid of our own uneaſineſs. I would only obſerve, that where not ſtrengthened by ſuperior motives, it is a caſual and precarious inſtrument of good, and ceaſes to operate, except in the immediate preſence,

ſence, and within the audible cry of miſery. This ſort of feeling forgets that any calamity exiſts which is out of its own ſight; and though it would empty its purſe for ſuch an occaſional object as rouſes tranſient ſenſibility, yet it ſeldom makes any ſtated proviſion for miſeries, which are not the leſs real becauſe they do not obtrude upon the ſight, and awaken the tenderneſs of immediate ſympathy. This is a mechanical charity, which requires ſprings and wheels to ſet it a going; whereas, real Chriſtian charity does not wait

to

to be acted upon by impreſſions and impulſes.

Another cauſe which very much intimidates well-diſpoſed people, is their terror, leſt the character of piety ſhould derogate from their reputation as men of ſenſe. Every man of the world naturally arrogates to himſelf the ſuperiority of underſtanding over every religious man. He, therefore, who has been accuſtomed to ſet a high value on his intellectual powers, muſt have made very conſiderable advances in piety before he can acquire a magnanimous indifference

ference to this uſurped ſuperiority; before he can ſubmit to the parſimonious allotment of wit and learning, which is aſſigned him by the ſupercilious hand of worldly wiſdom. But this attack upon his pride will be the beſt touchſtone of his ſincerity. If his advances have not been ſo conſiderable, then, by an hypocriſy of the leaſt common kind, he will be induſtrious to appear leſs good than he really is, leſt the detection of his ſerious propenſities ſhould draw on him the imputation of ordinary parts or low attainments. But the danger is, that while he is too ſedulouſly

intent

intent on maintaining his pretenſions as an ingenious man, his claims to piety ſhould daily become weaker. That which is long ſuppreſſed is too frequently extinguiſhed. For this reaſon, principally, it is to be regretted that religious converſation ſhould be ſo carefully baniſhed from polite company. Were it otherwiſe, young and baſhful piety, inſtead of being afraid to ſhew its head, would be cultivated, cheriſhed, and encouraged. For while we are beings compounded of paſſion as well as intellect, the devotion of the generality is not ſo purely ſpiritual

as not to ſtand in need of every external and collateral help. Fire is too apt to be extinguiſhed without the aid of ſuch material fuel as is poſſeſſed of igneous particles.

Nothing, perhaps, more plainly diſcovers the faint impreſſion which religion has really made upon our hearts, than this diſinclination, even of good people, to ſerious converſation. Let me not be miſunderſtood; I do not mean the wrangle of debate; I do not mean the gall of controverſy; I do not mean the fiery ſtrife of *opinions*, than which nothing can

can be leſs favourable to good nature, good manners, or good ſociety. But it were to be wiſhed, that it was not thought ill-bred and indiſcreet that the eſcapes of the tongue ſhould now and then betray the "abundance of the heart:" that when ſuch ſubjects are caſually introduced, a diſcouraging coldneſs did not inſtantly take place of that ſprightly animation of countenance which made common topics intereſting. If theſe outward and viſible ſigns were unequivocal, we ſhould form but moderate ideas of the inward and ſpiritual grace. It were to

be wiſhed, that ſuch ſubjects were not thought dull *merely* becauſe they are good; that they had the common chance of fair diſcuſſion; and that parts and learning were not aſhamed to exert themſelves on occaſions where both might appear to ſo much advantage. If the heart were really intereſted, could the affections forbear now and then to break out into language? Artiſts, phyſicians, merchants, lawyers, and ſcholars, keep up the ſpirit of their profeſſions by mutual intercourſe. New lights are ſtruck out, improvements are ſuggeſted, emulation is kindled, love

love of the object is inflamed, mistakes are rectified, and desire of excellence is excited, by communication. And is piety alone so very easy of acquisition, so very natural to our corrupt hearts, or so certainly progressive of itself, as to require none of the helps which are indispensable on all other subjects? Travellers, who are to visit any particular country, are full of earnest inquiry, and diligent research; they think nothing indifferent by which their future pleasure or advantage may be affected. Every hint which may procure them any information,

or caution them againſt any danger, is thankfully received; and all this, becauſe they are really in *earneſt* in their preparation for this journey; and do fully *believe*, not only that there is ſuch a country, but that they have a perſonal intereſt in the good, or evil, which may be found in it.

A farther danger to *good kind of people* ſeems to ariſe from a miſtaken idea, that only great and actual ſins are to be guarded againſt. Whereas, ſins of omiſſion make up, perhaps, the moſt formidable part of

their

their catalogue of offences. Theſe generally ſupply in number what they want in weight, and are the more dangerous for being little oſtenſible. They continue to be repeated with leſs regret, becauſe the remembrance of their predeceſſors does not, like the remembrance of formal, actual crimes, aſſume a body and a ſhape, and terrify by the impreſſion of particular ſcenes and circumſtances. While the memory of tranſacted evil haunts a tender conſcience by perpetual apparition; omitted duty, having no local or perſonal exiſtence, not being

recorded by ſtanding acts and deeds, and having no diſtinct image to which the mind may recur, ſinks into quiet oblivion, without deeply wounding the conſcience, or tormenting the imagination. Theſe omiſſions were, perhaps, among the "ſecret ſins," from which the royal penitent ſo earneſtly deſired to be cleanſed: and it is worthy of the moſt ſerious conſideration, that theſe are the offences againſt which the Goſpel pronounces very alarming denunciations. It is not leſs againſt negative than actual evil, that affectionate exhortation, lively remonſtrance,

ſtrance, and pointed parable, are exhauſted. It is againſt the tree which bore NO fruit, the lamp which had NO oil, the unprofitable ſervant who made NO uſe of his talent, that the ſevere ſentence is denounced; as well as againſt *corrupt* fruit, *bad* oil, and talents *ill* employed. We are led to believe, from the ſame high authority, that omitted duties, and neglected opportunities, will furniſh no inconſiderable portion of our future condemnation. A very awful part of the deciſion, in the great day of account, ſeems to be reſerved merely for omiſſions and

nega-

negatives. Ye gave me NO meat; ye gave me NO drink; ye took me NOT in; ye viſited me NOT. On the puniſhment attending poſitive crimes, as being more naturally obvious, more logically conſequent, it was not, perhaps, thought ſo neceſſary to inſiſt.

Another cauſe, which ſtill further impedes the reception of Religion even among the well-diſpoſed, is, that garment of ſadneſs in which people delight to ſuppoſe her dreſſed; and that life of hard auſterity, and pining abſtinence, which they pretend

tend ſhe enjoins her diſciples. And it were well if this were only the miſrepreſentation of her declared enemies; but unhappily, it is the too frequent miſconception of her injudicious friends. But ſuch an overcharged picture is not more unamiable than it is unlike: for I will venture to affirm, that Religion, with all her beautiful and becoming ſanctity, impoſes fewer ſacrifices, not only of rational, but of pleaſurable enjoyment, than the uncontrolled dominion of any one vice. Her ſervice is not only perfect ſafety, but perfect freedom. She is not ſo tyran-

tyrannizing as Paſſion, ſo exacting as the World, nor ſo deſpotic as Faſhion. Let us try the caſe by a parallel, and examine it, not as affecting our virtue, but our pleaſure. Does Religion forbid the cheerful enjoyments of life as rigorouſly as Avarice forbids them? Does ſhe require ſuch ſacrifices of our eaſe as Ambition, or ſuch renunciations of our quiet as Pride? Does Devotion *murder ſleep* like Diſſipation? Does ſhe deſtroy Health like Intemperance? Does ſhe annihilate Fortune like Gaming? Does ſhe imbitter Life like Diſcord; or

abridge

abridge it like Duelling? Does Religion impoſe more vigilance than Suſpicion? or half as many mortifications as Vanity? Vice has her martyrs: and the moſt auſtere and ſelf-denying Aſcetic (who miſtakes the genius of Chriſtianity almoſt as much as her enemies) never tormented himſelf with ſuch cruel and cauſeleſs ſeverity as that with which Envy lacerates her unhappy votaries. Worldly honour obliges us to be at the trouble of reſenting injuries; but Religion ſpares us that inconvenience by commanding us to forgive them; and by this injunction conſults our hap-

happineſs no leſs than our virtue; for the torment of conſtantly hating any one muſt be, at leaſt, equal to the ſin of it.—If this eſtimate be fairly made, then is the balance clearly on the ſide of Religion even in the article of pleaſure.

It is an infirmity not uncommon to good kind of people, to comfort themſelves that they live in the exerciſe of ſome one natural good quality, and to make a religious merit of a conſtitutional happineſs. They have alſo a ſtrong propenſity to ſeparate what God has joined; belief and prac-

practice; the creed and the commandments; actions and motives; moral duty and religious obedience. Whereas, you will hardly find, in all the New Teſtament, a moral, or a ſocial virtue, that is not hedged in by ſome religious injunction: ſcarcely a good action enjoined towards others, but it is connected with ſome exhortation to perſonal purity. All the charities of benevolence are, in general, ſo agreeable to the natural make of the heart, that it is a very tender mercy of God to have made that a duty, which, to finer ſpirits, would have been irreſiſtible as an in-

inclination; and to annex the higheſt future reward to the greateſt preſent pleaſure. But in order to give a religious ſanction to a ſocial virtue, the duty of viſiting the fatherleſs and widow in their affliction, is inſeparably attached to the difficult and ſelf-denying injunction of keeping ourſelves unſpotted from the world. This adjunct is the more needful, as many are apt to make a kind of moral commutation, and to allow themſelves ſo much pleaſure in exchange for ſo much charity. But one good quality can never ſtand proxy for another. The Chriſtain

tian virtues derive their higheſt luſtre from aſſociation: they have ſuch a ſpirit of ſociety, that they are weak and imperfect when ſolitary; their radiance is brightened by communication, and their natural ſtrength multiplied by their alliance with each other.

It cannot be denied that *good ſort of people* ſometimes uſe religion as the voluptuous uſe phyſic. As the latter employ medicine to make health agree with luxury, the former conſider religion as a medium to reconcile peace of conſcience with a

life of pleaſure. But no moral chemiſtry can blend natural contradictions; the world will ſtill be uppermoſt, and religion will diſdain to coaleſce with its antipathy.

Let me not be ſuſpected of intending to inſinuate that religion encourages men to fly from ſociety, and hide themſelves in ſolitudes: to renounce the generous and important duties of active life, for the viſionary, cold, and fruitleſs virtues of an Hermitage, or a Cloyſter. No: the miſchief ariſes not from our living in the world, but from the

world

world living in us; occupying our hearts, and monopolizing our affections. Action is the life of virtue, and the world is the nobleſt theatre of action. Perhaps ſome of the moſt perfect patterns of human conduct may be found in the moſt public ſtations, and among the buſieſt orders of mankind. It is, indeed, a ſcene of trial, but the glory of the triumph is proportioned to the peril of the conflict. A ſenſe of danger quickens circumſpection, and makes virtue more vigilant. Lot maintained his integrity in a great city, pro-

verbially wicked, and forfeited it in the boſom of retirement.

It has been ſaid that worldly good ſort of people are a greater credit to their profeſſion, by exhibiting more cheerfulneſs, gaiety, and happineſs, than are viſible in ſerious Chriſtians. If this aſſertion be true, which I very much ſuſpect, is it not probable that the apparent eaſe and gaiety of the former may be derived from the ſame ſource of conſolation which Mrs. Quickly recommends to Falſtaff, in Shakeſpear's admirable picture of the death-bed ſcene of

of that witty profligate? "He "wiſhed for comfort, quoth mine "hoſteſs, and began to talk of God; "now I, to comfort him, begged "him he ſhould not think of God: "it was time enough to trouble "himſelf with theſe things." Do not many deceive themſelves by drawing water from theſe dry wells of comfort? and patch up a precarious and imperfect happineſs in this world, by diverting their attention from the concerns of the next?

Another obſtruction to the growth of piety, is that unhappy prejudice

which even good kind of people too often entertain againſt thoſe who differ from them in opinion. Every man who is ſincerely in earneſt to advance the intereſts of religion, will have acquired ſuch a degree of candour, as to become indifferent by whom good is done, or who has the reputation of doing it, provided it be actually done. He will be anxious to increaſe the ſtock of human virtue, and of human happineſs, by every poſſible means. He will whet and ſharpen every inſtrument of goodneſs, though it be not caſt in his own mould, or faſhioned after

after his own pattern. He will never conſider whether the form ſuits his own particular taſte, but whether the inſtrument itſelf be calculated to accompliſh the work of his maſter. It is a teſt by which he will be able to judge of his own ſincerity, if the delight he feels at hearing of a meritorious action ſuffers no abatement, becauſe it was performed by one who differs from him in his religious, or even his political, ſentiments.

I ſhall conclude theſe looſe and immethodical hints with a general

addreſs to thoſe who content themſelves with a decent profeſſion of the doctrines, inſtead of a diligent diſcharge of the duties of Chriſtianity. Believe, and forgive me:—you are the people who lower religion in the eyes of its enemies. The openly prophane,* the avowed enemies to God and goodneſs, confirm the truths they mean to oppoſe, illuſtrate the doctrines they deny, and

* In the laſt days ſhall come ſcoffers walking after their own luſts, &c. &c. 2 Peter, chap. iii. ver. 3. with a multitude of other texts to the ſame purpoſe.

accompliſh

accompliſh the predictions they diſbelieve. But you, like an inadequate and faithleſs prop, overturn the edifice which you pretend to ſupport.——When an acute and keen-eyed infidel meaſures your lives with the rule by which you profeſs to walk; he finds ſo little analogy between them, the copy is ſo unlike the pattern, that this inconſiſtency of yours is the paſs through which his moſt dangerous attack is made. And I muſt confeſs, that, of all the arguments, which the malignant induſtry of infidelity has been able to muſter, the conduct of profeſſing Chriſtians

Chriſtians ſeems to me to be the only one which is really capable of ſtaggering a man of ſenſe.——He hears of a ſpiritual and ſelf-denying religion; he reads the beatitudes; he obſerves that the grand artillery of the Goſpel is planted againſt pride. He then turns to the tranſcript of this perfect original; the lives which pretend to be faſhioned by it. There he ſees, with triumphant deriſion, that pride, ſelf-love, ſelf-ſufficiency, unbounded perſonal expence, and an inordinate appetite for pleaſure, are reputable vices in the eyes of many of thoſe who acknowledge

knowledge the truth of the Chriſtian doctrines. He weighs that meekneſs to which a bleſſing is promiſed, with that arrogance which is too common to be very diſhonourable. He compares that non-conformity to the world, which the Bible makes the criterion of a believer, with that rage for amuſement which is not conſidered as diſreputable in a Chriſtian. He oppoſes the ſelf-denying and lowly character of the Author of our faith with the ſenſual practices of his followers. He finds little reſemblance between the reſtraints preſcribed, and the gratifications

tions indulged in. What concluſions muſt a ſpeculative reaſoning ſceptic draw from ſuch premiſes? Is it any wonder that ſuch phraſes as a broken ſpirit, a contrite heart, poverty of ſpirit, refraining the ſoul, keeping it low, and caſting down high imaginations, ſhould be to the unbeliever "fooliſhneſs," when ſuch humiliating doctrines are a "ſtumbling block" to profeſſing Chriſtians, who cannot always cordially reliſh a religion which profeſſedly tells them it was ſent to ſtain the pride of human glory, and to exclude boaſting?

But

But though the paſſive and ſelf-denying virtues are not high in the eſteem of mere good ſort of people, yet they are peculiarly the evangelical virtues. The world extols brilliant actions; the Goſpel enjoins good habits and right motives: it ſeldom inculcates thoſe ſplendid deeds which make heroes, or thoſe ſounding ſentences which conſtitute philoſophers; but it enjoins the harder taſk of renouncing ſelf, of living uncorrupted in the world, of ſubduing beſetting ſins, and of not thinking of ourſelves more highly than we ought. The *acquiſition* of glory

glory was the precept of other religions, the *contempt* of it is the perfection of Chriſtianity.

Let us then be conſiſtent, and we ſhall never be contemptible, even in the eyes of our enemies. Let not the unbeliever ſay that we have one ſet of opinions for our theory, and another for our practice; that to the vulgar

We ſhew the rough and thorny way to heav'n,
While we the primroſe path of dalliance tread.

It would become our characters as men of ſenſe, of which conſiſtency

ency is a moſt unequivocal proof, to chooſe ſome rule and abide by it. An extempore Chriſtian is a ridiculous character. Fixed principles will be followed by a conſiſtent courſe of action; while indeciſion of ſpirit will produce inſtability of conduct. If there be a model which we profeſs to admire, let us ſquare our lives by it. If the Koran of Mahomet, or the Revelations of Zoroaſter, be a perfect guide, let us follow one of them. If either Epicurus, Zeno, or Confucius, be the pecular object of our veneration and reſpect, let us faſhion our conduct

duct by the dictates of their philoſophy; and then, though we may be wrong, we ſhall not be abſurd. But if the Bible be in truth the word of God, as we profeſs to believe, we need look no farther for a conſummate pattern. Let us then make it the rule of our practice here, if it is indeed to be the rule of our judgment hereafter.

But I am willing to flatter myſelf that the moral and intellectual ſcene about us begins to brighten. I indulge myſelf in moments of the moſt enthuſiaſtic and delightful viſion; taking encouragement from that

that glorious prophecy, that "of the "increaſe of his government there "ſhall be no end." A prediction which ſeems to be gradually accompliſhing; and in no inſtance more, perhaps, than in the noble attempt about to be made for the abolition of the African ſlave-trade. For what event can human wiſdom foreſee more likely to contribute to "give the Son the Heathen for his "inheritance, and the uttermoſt "parts of the earth for his poſſeſ-"ſion," than the ſucceſs of ſuch an enterprize, which will reſtore the luſtre of the Chriſtian name, too

long ſullied with oppreſſion, cruelty and injuſtice?

A good ſpirit ſeems to be at work. A catholic temper is diffuſing itſelf among all ſects and parties: an enlightened candour, and a liberal toleration, were never more prevalent; good men combat each other's opinions with leſs rancour, and better manners. We have many public encouragements; we have a pious king; a wiſe and virtuous miniſter; many reſpectable, and not a few ſerious clergy. (May their number daily

daily increaſe!) Among theſe ſome of the firſt in dignity are the firſt in conduct. An increaſing deſire to inſtruct the poor, to inform the ignorant, and to reclaim the vicious, is ſpreading among us. The late Royal Proclamation affords an honourable ſanction to virtuous endeavours, and lends nerves and ſinews to the otherwiſe feeble exertions of individuals, by enforcing laws wiſely planned, but hithereto feebly executed. In ſhort, there is a good hope that we ſhall more and more become that happy people who have the Lord for their God: that as

profperity is already within our walls, peace and virtue may abide in our dwellings.

But vain will be all endeavours after *partial* and *fubordinate* amendment. Reformation muft begin with the GREAT, or it will never be effectual. *Their* example is the fountain from whence the vulgar draw their habits, actions, and characters. To expect to reform the poor while the opulent are corrupt, is to throw odours into the ftream while the fprings are poifoned. Even the excellent inftitution of

Sunday

Sunday ſchools for training religious ſervants, will avail but little, if, as ſoon as the perſons there educated come into the families of the Great, they behold practices diametrically oppoſite to the inſtructions they have been imbibing. If they fall into the houſes of the profligate, they will hear the doctrines, which they have been taught to reverence, derided; if into mere worldly families, they will ſee them neglected; and to the eſſential principle of vital Chriſtianity, oblivion is ſcarcely leſs fatal than contempt.

If therefore, the Rich and Great will not, from a liberal ſpirit of doing right, abſtain from thoſe offences, for which the poor are to ſuffer fines and impriſonments, effectual good cannot be done. It will ſignify little to lay penalties on the horſes of the drover, or on the waggon of the huſbandman, while the chariot wheel, of the Great roll with inceſſant motion: and the ſacred day on which the ſons of induſtry are commanded by royal proclamation to deſiſt from travelling, is for that very reaſon ſelected for the journeys of the Great, and preferred, becauſe the

the road is encumbered with fewer interruptions. But will it not ſtrike every well-meaning Sunday traveller with a generous remorſe, when he reflects that he owes the accommodation of an unobſtructed road to the very obedience which is paid by others to that divine and human law which he is in the very act of violating?

Will not the common people think it a little inequitable that they are abridged of the diverſions of the public-houſe and the gaming-yard on Sunday evening, when they ſhall hear

that many houſes of the firſt nobility are on that evening crowded with company, and ſuch amuſements carried on as are prohibited by human laws even on common days? As imitation, and a deſire of being in the faſhion, govern the lower orders of mankind, it is to be feared that they will not think reformation reputable, while they ſee it *recommended* only, and not *practiſed*, by their betters. A precept counteracted by an example, is worſe than fruitleſs, it is ridiculous: and the common people will be tempted to ſet an inferior value on goodneſs, when

when they find it is only expected from the lower ranks. They cannot surely but smile at the disinterestedness of their superiors, who, while they seem anxiously concerned to save others, are so little solicitous about their own state. The ambitious vulgar will hardly relish a salvation which is only intended for plebeians; nor will they be apt to entertain very exalted notions of that promised future reward, the road to which they perceive their betters are so much more earnest to point out to *them*, than to walk in themselves.

It

It was not by inflicting pains and penalties that Chriſtianity firſt made its way into the world: the divine truths it inculcated received irreſiſtible confirmation from the LIVES, PRACTICES, and EXAMPLES of its venerable profeſſors. Theſe were arguments which no popular prejudice could reſiſt, no Jewiſh logic refute, and no Pagan perſecution diſcredit. Had the primitive Chriſtians only *praiſed and promulgated* the moſt perfect religion the world ever ſaw, it could have produced but very ſlender effects on the faith and manners of the people, if the jealous

jealous and inquiſitive eye of malice could have detected that the Doctrines they recommended had not been illuſtrated by the Lives they led.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

THE public favour having already brought this little Eſſay to another edition, the author has been ſedulous to diſcover any particular objections that have been made to it. Since the preceding ſheets were printed off, it has been ſuggeſted by ſome very reſpectable perſons who have honoured this ſlight performance with their notice, that it inculcates a too rigid auſterity, and carries the point of obſerving Sunday much too far; that it takes away all

all the uſual occupations of the day, without ſubſtituting any others in their ſtead; and that it only pulls down a wrong ſyſtem, without ſo much as attempting to build up a right one. The author begs leave to obſerve, in his own defence, that in animadverting on error, he purpoſely avoided inſiſting on obvious duty. To tell people what they already know to be right, was leſs the intention of this addreſs, than to obſerve upon practices which long habit had prevented them from perceiving to be wrong. Senſible and well-meaning perſons can hardly be

at

at a loſs on a ſubject which has exhauſted precept and wearied exhortation. To have expatiated on it, would only have been to repeat what is already known and acknowledged to be right, even by thoſe whom the hurry of engagements will not allow to take breath one day in a week, that they may run the race of pleaſure with more alacrity on the other ſix. But probably it is not the duties, but the amuſements appropriated to the day about which the inquiry is made. It will, perhaps, be found, that the intervals of a Sunday regularly devoted to all its reaſonable

and

and obvious duties, are not likely to be ſo very tedious, but that they might be eaſily and pleaſantly filled up by cheerful, innocent, and inſtructive converſation. Human delights would be very circumſcribed indeed, if the practices here noticed as erroneous, included the whole circle of enjoyment. Are the pleaſures of retirement, the pleaſures of friendſhip, the pleaſures of intellect, and the pleaſures of beneficence, to be eſtimated as nothing?

There will not be found, perhaps, a ſingle perſon who ſhall honour theſe

theſe pages with a peruſal, who has not been repeatedly told, with an air of impoſing gravity, by thoſe who produce cards on a Sunday evening, *that it is better to play than to talk ſcandal.* Before this pithy axiom was invented, it was not perhaps ſuſpected that Sunday gaming would ever be adduced as an argument in favour of morals. Without entering into the comparative excellence of theſe two occupations, or preſuming to determine which has a claim to pre-eminence of piety, one may venture to be thankful that theſe alternatives do not ſeem to

empty

empty the whole ſtock of human reſource.

People in the gay and elegant ſcenes of life are perpetually complaining that an extenſive acquaintance, and the neceſſity of being conſtantly engaged in large circles and mixed aſſemblies, leave them little leiſure for family enjoyment, ſelect converſation, and domeſtic delights. Others, with no leſs earneſtneſs, lament that the hurry of public ſtations, and the neceſſary demands of active life, allow them no time for any but frivolous reading. Now the re-

currence of one Sunday in every week ſeems to hold out an inviting remedy for both theſe evils. The ſweet and delightful pleaſures of family ſociety might then be uninterruptedly enjoyed, by the habitual excluſion of trifling and idle viſitors, who do not come to ſee their friends, but to get rid of themſelves. Perſons of faſhion, living in the ſame houſe, and connected by the cloſeſt ties, whom buſineſs and pleaſure keep aſunder during the greateſt part of the week, would then have an opportunity of ſpending a little time together, and of cultivating that friendſhip for each

each other, and that affection for their children, to which the preſent manners are not *very* favourable. To the other ſet of complainers, thoſe who can find no time to read, this interval naturally preſents itſelf; and it luckily happens, that ſome of the moſt enlightened men the world ever ſaw have, not unfrequently, devoted their rare talents to ſubjects peculiarly ſuited to this day; and that not merely in the didactic form of ſermons, which men of the world affect to diſdain; but in every alluring ſhape which human ingenuity could aſſume. It

luckily happens, among a thouſand other inſtances, that the deepeſt metaphyſician *, the greateſt aſtronomer, the ſublimeſt poet, the acuteſt reaſoner, the politeſt writer, the moſt conſummate philoſopher, and the profoundeſt inveſtigator of nature, which this, or perhaps any country has produced, have all written on ſuch ſubjects as are analogous to the buſineſs of this day. Such authors as theſe, even wits, philoſophers, and men of the world,

* Locke, Newton, Milton, Butler, Addiſon, Bacon, Boyle.

muſt acknowledge that it is not bigotry to read, nor enthuſiaſm to commend. Of this illuſtrious groupe only *one* was a clergyman, which to a certain claſs of readers will be a ſtrong recommendation: though it is a little hard that the faſtidiouſneſs of modern taſte ſhould undervalue the learned and pious labours of divines, only becauſe they are *profeſſional*. In every other function, a man's compoſitions are not the leſs eſteemed becauſe they peculiarly belong to his more immediate buſineſs. Blackſtone's opinions in juriſprudence are of unqueſtionable validity,

dity, though he was a lawyer; Sydenham is ſtill conſulted as oracular in fevers, in ſpite of his having been a phyſician; and the Commentaries of Cæſar are of eſtabliſhed authority in military operations, notwithſtanding he was a ſoldier.

FINIS.